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On the STONE MONUMENTS *of the* KHASI HILL TRIBES, *and on some of the Peculiar Rites and Customs of the People.* By Major H. H. GODWIN-AUSTEN, F.R.G.S., Deputy Superintendent Topographical Survey of India.

121 THE increasing interest that is taken at the present day in ethnology and the history of man in past and present ages, more particularly in the customs of semi-civilised races in distant quarters of the world as compared with the state of those races who dwelt in Europe in early historic times, has led me to put together the information I obtained regarding the people of the Khāsi Hill tracts. Their customs are peculiar, and the fact that they are among the very few who erect at the present day monolithic monuments, is alone of great interest.

This has not escaped the attention of different travellers, 122 officers of the Indian service and others who have visited that quarter of the Bengal Presidency, and from time to time papers have been published; these are scattered through a number of periodicals, and in no case is a complete record of these Hill people to be found.

Notices on the Garos and Khāsis, as well as many of the other tribes on the north-eastern frontier of Bengal, are generally very short, in some instances mislead, and in some cases do the peo- 152 ple, savages though they be, but little justice; in truth, there is very much to admire in these Hill people, they are in many ways, socially and physically, far above their Bengāli neighbours of the plains; intercourse with them is, in consequence, much pleasanter, easier, and has far greater interest; innate honesty and truth in their manners of dealing often crop out, more especially in villages well within the hills, where contact with the people of the plains is of rare occurrence.

101 I shall notice the best of these papers having reference to tribes inhabiting the range of hills running west to east, south of Assam, from the sharp southern bend of the Brahmaputra up to the Kopili and Diyung river, in long. 92 deg. 45 min., a length of some one hundred and sixty-five miles.

114 In the "Asiatic Researches," vol. iii, published so far back as 113 1792, is a very interesting paper on the Gāros, by Mr. John Eliot; his travels, however, did not extend so far to the east as the Khāsias.

The Rev. A. B. Lish, a missionary of Cherra Poonjee, published an account of the Khāsias in the "Calcutta Christian Observer" for 1838, he gives an account of their mode of breaking eggs for omens, etc.

Neither in M'Cosh's "Topography of Assam," or in Robinson's "Assam," is any newer or better information afforded concerning

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the Gāro or Khāsi than is to be found in earlier writers, and no allusion is made to the stone monuments. The first contains a very exaggerated and by no means faithful account of both the Khāsi and Gāro, and the latter has copied Elliott's descriptions. 114 113

Dr. Hooker, in his "Himalayan Journals," gives some good drawings of the stone monuments—alludes briefly to their form, and the habits of the people. Dr. Hooker also alluded to the Khāsias at the meeting of the British Association at Norwich in 1868; thus attention was drawn to them in a prominent manner. A paper was written shortly after this by Lieut. E. N. Steel, R.A., who had been quartered for some time at Cherra Poonjee, and published in the "Transactions of the Ethnological Society," vol. vii.

The latest paper that we have on the Khāsias is one published in the "Ausland" of last year, by — Schlagintweit, yet is not confined solely to the people, but treats of the meteorology of the district, and very briefly of the geology. The Gāros and Nāgas are also noticed. I hope to be able in a future paper to call attention to these people, and shall then allude to one or two paragraphs where I think M. Schlagintweit has been led into error. To one such error I would now refer. He says, "The Khassias are the most numerous and most powerful of the tribes inhabiting the part running from west to south (he must mean east) in this mountainous district, but it is also necessary to mention the two groups of Gārdos and Jaintias who are their neighbours in the south (he must mean the east) and the west. The grade of civilisation of the Gārdos and Jaintias is very low, etc., etc." Now, M. Schlagintweit must have been quite misinformed as regards the Jaintias, and he has evidently never been among them, or he would have known that the Jaintias, or more properly speaking, the Sintengs, are of the same stock as the Khāsis, that the language is the same with some slight modification, and that their customs and religious rites are almost identical. In Cherra Poonjee itself there is a small hamlet of emigrants from the Jaintia side, and they are found living among the Khasias in the main village. Many of the clans in Cherra claim to have originally come, several generations back, from the side of Jawai. 114

M. Schlagintweit further on says:—"The want of all modesty in the grown-up people of these primitive races, to whom we apply the term savages, is very remarkable." With this statement I do not agree, and consider they have the feeling strongly developed, and are quite as particular about the exposure of their persons as the people of India proper. The Gāro wears the "Lungooti" quite as large as that worn by the lower classes in Bengal and N. W. Provinces, etc.,

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114 etc., when employed at heavy labour. Very much more decent is itthan the thin gauze-like cloth worn by even the better class of Baboo in Calcutta, which makes hardly any pretence of concealing the private parts. I can speak for the Gāro women being particularly quiet and modest in their demeanour; and the young men on reaching a certain age, and until they marry, live and take their meals apart in a large house constructed for them; this is always the largest in the village, and where strangers are put up. This custom mitigates strongly against "their want of modesty", so often advanced, and proves, if anything, an advanced state of morality.

Again, in speaking of the Khasis and the looseness of their family and domestic relations, which are somewhat easy, the frequent changing of wives is not so common as might be supposed, and in the remoter villages I should say very rare.. There is a very strong force which militates against its frequent practice. The men of these tribes select their wives not for beauty and delicacy, but for their well-developed forms and hard-working qualities—those who can carry heavy loads throughout the day and the more children she begets the better for the pair: they can cultivate as these grow up a larger area, and live in greater comfort.

[113] In the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, March, 1852, is to be found one of the best papers on the Khāsis, by the Rev. W. Pryse, who was attached to the Welsh Mission working both at Cherra Poonjee and Sylhet. A very good article appears in the *Calcutta Review* for 1856, vol. 27, being a review of the "Geology of the Khāsi Hills, with Observations on the Meteorology and Ethnology of that District," by Thomas Oldham, Superintendent of the Geological Survey of India. a work containing much valuable and interesting matter. An Introduction to the Khāsia Language, by the Rev. W. Pryse, is also included in the above review.

114 101 The various ways in which the word Khāsi has been spelt by different writers, has no doubt puzzled many an European reader, and will be familiar no doubt to some in the form of Cossyah, Khassyah, Kasia, etc. The most correct has been adopted by the mission at Cherra Poonjee in their printed works in the language, and adopted in this paper.

101 197 They call themselves Ki Khási, and their country Ká Ri Khási;* and without going out of our way to seek for a derivation of this word, may it not be derived from the Hindustani "Ghāsi"—grassy: the whole of the upper lands being of this nature, in contradiction to the forest-clad valleys and slopes of the outer hills both north and south. The Khásias never pro-

* Compare "Ri", a mountain (Tibetan).

nounce the hard G; and in all words of Hindustani origin this letter has the sound of K. 101 [197]

They are called by the tribes of Kúkis and Nágás on the west "Káro", the name they themselves have for the whole mass of hill people on their western side, the Gāros, though as we pass towards their confines, we find the names of local clans giving way to this general term which was not known to some of the villagers of West Nongstoin, who call the Gāros "Dékor."

The Gāro appellation for the Khāsis is "Dikkil" or "Digil"; and it was very interesting to find, after visiting the villages of both, that they mutually fear each other, and consequently border raids never occur. The Gāros owned that they feared the bow and arrow of their neighbour, a weapon they themselves are unacquainted with the use of.

The Khāsis always point to the east as the quarter from which they emigrated, but there is very little, if any, similarity with the languages of the people now occupying the hills on that side. [173] [197]

Before entering further on the subject matter of this paper, I must request my hearers or readers to remember that having no knowledge colloquially of the Khasi language, the information I give was obtained from natives who understood either English or Hindustani well. The greater part of the information was given me by a very intelligent man, a native inspector of schools in the district; thus I hope that all errors that exist may be hereafter corrected by others who have been able to elucidate with greater exactness the meaning of their many different rites and superstitions. 115

Certainly the most striking objects of interest in the Khāsi Hills are the upright stone monuments that are to be seen all over the country; these, set up by the wayside, or in the villages, more frequently cutting the sky on prominent hills, with the large slabs horizontally set before them, at once recall the Druidical remains of our own island, northern France, etc., and lead one to marvel at the similarity of the custom, and to inquire its origin and design. Many who visit those hills take it at once for granted that they are the graves of illustrious men, or, after a vain endeavour to get some information from the coolies about them, let the matter rest, or finally believe that the ashes of the dead, to whose memory the monoliths are erected, are buried under the flat kind of altar or dolmen seen in front. 764 211

It is always a very difficult matter to obtain information from semi-civilised people on such a subject as their religious rites, especially if the inquirer is ignorant of their language. A slight knowledge of Hindustani on the part of the Khāsia villager, renders the attempt still more hopeless, and the information given quite erroneous.

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764 211 The tall upright stones are called "Mao bynna", from "mao", a stone; "bynna", to make known, to be informed, literally a monument. They are also known by the term, "Mao shinran", the male stone, while the flat seat-like slab in front is called "Mao Kynthai", the female stone, representative of all life, being in pairs. My informant explained this by saying the monument would be imperfect without the flat stone or its female adjunct.

769 764 211 The ashes of the dead are never deposited under the horizontal slabs always to be seen in front of the upright sets, the monument having no connection with funeral obsequies whatever. The monument is purely one to perpetuate the memory of a person long deceased, who, as a spirit, has watched over or brought good fortune to a descendant, his family, or clan. Wealth or [554] renown of the deceased has no connection with the size of the monument, which may be of any dimensions, from stones a foot or two and upward, but depends on the wealth of those who erect such mementos, and on the benefits the deceased has conferred after passing into the world of spirits and demons, for, according to Khāsi belief, the spirits of the dead and demons are the cause of all joy or woe—they give riches or strike with disease and death.

These monuments are not set up facing any particular point of the compass; the front is generally selected, having reference to the site and its surroundings: thus a number set up together on a hill-top will be found facing outwards, those by the wayside facing the road; however, single sets, standing on a hill-top or rising ground, as a rule, face to the southward.

The history connected with the erection of some large slabs near Cherra Poonjee will exemplify this curious custom. One of the clans, "Kūr" in Cherra, is known as the "Nongtariang"; and many years ago died an old lady of the clan, not famous for anything in particular during her lifetime, but whose virtues appear to have been great after her demise, for after this the Nongtariang clan, from being a poor one, rose gradually to considerable wealth; she, when propitiated and called on for aid, never failed her race, and in return, after some sixty years or more, they raised to her memory five well-cut stones, which are to be seen on the west side of the road between Cherra Poonjee and Surarun, the central monolith adorned with a kind of rose cut in relief on the front face, and an ornamental disc on the apex. It would appear that she still remained the guardian spirit of her clan; they continued to prosper, and as a further token to her memory, they added in 1869 five more stones on the other side of the road, and in a line with the first set.

It may very naturally be asked how descendants possibly dis-

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cover what their ancestors are doing for them, and what their views and inclinations may be as regards the amount of aid they may give. To a Khasia there is no difficulty about the matter; when in distress or requiring aid of any kind, seeking omens by the breaking of eggs (which I will hereafter describe) he appeals to and propitiates any one ancestor he may select; only one or two may promise such protection, and these it may so happen have died years ago. The benefit also conferred may be very trivial, and sufficiently acknowledged by the setting up of stones of small size; on the contrary, if great favours are conferred on the wealthy we find large monoliths forming conspicuous land-marks on many a hill-top, scattered over a large area of country, and which are mostly known to the country round by the name of the individuals who have wrought so much good in their after state.

These stones are never erected in pairs or in even numbers; in counting over a very large series still perfect, I found them invariably in sets of three, five, seven, or, as I have before mentioned in the case of the Nongtariang clan, in two sets, five and five, on opposite sites, to the same individual.* Even numbers are considered unfinished or imperfect.

A reference to the plans given, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, will show the various arrangements in which the stones are set up, both in a segment of a circle and at right angles to each other, as in fig. 3. The most common form, however, is in line, fig. 4. Fig. 1 consisted of a circular platform raised about two feet, faced with rough stones on the front face.* These three examples were observed on the hill of Lailang-kote, where the bazar is held, and I have not seen anywhere else the monoliths so arranged; in other parts of the country they are invariably set up in a straight row.

These monuments are also erected for such a reason as the following:—During the illness of a person, every kind of propitiation and exorcism either by the breaking of eggs, sacrifice of fowls, pigs, etc., and by the examination of the liver and viscera, having been made, and then failing to restore him; the sick man may vow that should he recover, he will erect a set of stones to one of his ancestors, who, it is presumed, on knowing of the intention, will do his best to save him.

In setting up these slabs all members of the community are under an obligation to assist on such an occasion, and are not paid for their labour, beyond receiving in the evening a little food or liquor at the dwelling of the family who have sought the aid. The skilled workmen employed on the stone-cutting are,

* Three and five are the most frequent numbers met with, nine very rare I have seen eleven.

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764 however, regularly paid, as is done when cutting the stones for
211 the funeral platform; while this work is in progress musicians
[533] are also entertained, and a continual beating of tom-toms (hand-drums) is kept up while the work is in progress.

That many of these monuments, and by far the larger number,
764 are of great age, may be inferred from the fact that their history
211 is quite lost.
171 As to their distribution, they are to be found over all the higher part of the range; the finest, certainly, in the central portion and in the vicinity of the larger villages, such as Cherra Poonjee, Juwai, Nurtiang, etc.

In Nongstoin, on the west, they gradually die out, and a few, not exceeding three or four feet in height, are to be found in the Khasia villages towards the Garo tribes, but at this limit the Langams come in, and their customs assimilate more with the former-named people. It is the same on the east and north-east of Jaintia; the stones set up are smaller and of rougher form, and by no means so numerous, yet they are to be seen in all kinds of out-of-the-way places quite overgrown with grass and jungle, where villages have not existed for years. Indications were not wanting, shewing that the country had been formerly much more populous, especially on the northern slopes of the Khasi and Janitia Hills. I have, on the other hand, never come across structures of the kind anywhere beyond the limits of Khasi-speaking people, that is, between longitude 91 deg. and 92 deg. 30 min., which includes the Jaintia Hills, the people of which part are called "Sintengs", differing in some minor points from the Khasis; the dialect is distinct, and there is so strong a type-form of likeness and expression, the two can be generally separated without inquiry. The same remarks hold good for the western side; a Khasi of the border Nongstoin villages can be told off at a glance: so strong are the great clan likenesses.

I have traversed the whole country on the east: viz., the North Cachar Hills, inhabited by tribes of Kookis and Nāgas, and had the Khasi ever occupied permanently a larger area either on the east or west, particularly the former, emigrating, as they are supposed to have done, from that side, I think we might have expected to find, occasionally, remains of their imperishable monuments. The only exception that I know of occurs on the road from Nenglo to Hangrūng, in the North Cachar Hills district, beyond Asālu, a part of the country now in the occupation of Nagas, and formerly entirely in that of Kacharis, who are Bodos or Méchis. The road lies through forest, keeping along the high spur; at about two miles from the peak of Hemeo are to be seen several large slabs of stone nearly level with the ground, one ten feet by six, covering some sort of receptacle, for the ends of the

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764 211 171

stones facing the sides are plainly visible. Near to these slabs is a platform with sides built up of rough stone, similar to those about Cherra Poonjee. Now Nāgas bury their dead, and no monument is erected, the graves being dug in the village street, often at the very door of the deceased person's house, all the protection and covering being a rough one of bamboo or straight sticks interwoven and neatly pegged down all round with hooked sticks. Some tribes of Kūks bury, others burn, but I have never observed any stones set up, or used to cover the grave. There is just a possibility that the slabs on the Hemeo ridge are the remains of an old Khāsi settlement, occupied, perhaps, for a short period when on their emigration westward.

The largest collection of huge slabs and upright stones that I have seen anywhere in the Khāsi Hills, is at Lailang-kote, the arrangement is so different in every way, that there can be little doubt that it was erected for a very different purpose, and was probably a place of meeting of the chiefs and elders of the clans. The steps to ascend it would indicate such a purpose, and we can imagine all the men of rank and influence seated around, and harangued by one of their number. I could never learn the history of this structure; although I made frequent inquiries, they could not say when or by whom it was set up. The stones, especially the large horizontal one, are of great size; this, with others, is of the granite found close by, but the hill on which the structure stands is an outlier of quartzitic sandstone, horizontally stratified, and great labour must have been expended in dragging such huge blocks into their present position; for the slope to the top of the rise, though not great, yet is quite sufficient to render such work a formidable undertaking. The weight of the largest horizontal slab was twenty tons eighteen hundredweight, and of all the stones composing its construction eighty tons. The horizontal granite slabs were unhewn, as well as the highest upright monolith, which stood eighteen feet nine inches. Eight of the upright stones out of the eleven were of sandstone. The largest slab is an irregular oval in shape, thirty feet by thirteen feet in longest and shortest axis, with a mean thickness of one foot and one-third, standing nearly five feet and a-half above the ground, and resting on ten upright unhewn pillars of granite; on the south side are four other slabs arranged close to the edge of the large one, and round all rise the eleven upright pillars; on the eastern end are two other slabs forming steps to ascend by.

I give a drawing of this very curious monument with a plan, and in an appendix the measurements of every stone, and these shew better than aught else the great massiveness of the work, and what an amount of labour these people must have expended in collecting the materials and setting them in this spot.

[see and plates 2-4, Ethnology 116 — — — Analysis]

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764 211 [483] I never saw the Khasis engaged in raising a stone into the upright position, but I saw the spars which had formed a sort of cradle on which the stones forming the monument erected by the Nongtariang clan previously alluded to had been dragged from the spot where they had been quarried. They consisted of strong curved limbs of trees roughly smoothed and rounded, and would present a very small surface to friction. These stones had been taken from the side of a hill near, and had apparently been wedged out of the face of a step in the exposed sand-stone strata.

It may be as well that I should here give some account of the funeral rites of the Khasis, which will show there is no connection between them and the monuments I have been describing, and with which the other stone erections have no doubt been often confounded. In their funeral rites there is much that is wonderfully strange, and to those unacquainted with their superstitions, appears unmeaning. There can be no doubt but 771 769 778 the Khasis have a very strong belief in a future state, and to say that they have no religion, as has been stated by some writers, is erroneous. True, they have no temples for either worship or idols, the religion of the people is principally a demon worship, and we find the Khasi ever in communion with or in the power, as he supposes, of the spirits of those who have gone before him. While, added to these spirits of their ancestors are numberless demons, male and female, ever ready, if not propitiated, to bring evil upon himself or his undertakings, and whose power even extends over the spirits of the dead. Every dark shady wood, every stream, every conspicuous hill has its presiding demon, which in many instances gives the name to the site. Thus, the hill of Lârû, in North Jaintia, beyond Nongjinghi, is the abode of a one-legged demon, whom to see is death, but who was occasionally heard in the dense forest that clothed the northern steep face of the mountain, so said the credulous villagers of Nongtâng.

764 The dead are burnt on a funeral pyre, the logs of which are arranged very regularly, and the body lies in a sort of bed formed by them.

The calcined bones and ashes are collected and placed in an earthen vessel (small "ghara"), and are generally buried in some adjacent spot, a stone being placed over the vase for security; they do not, however, remain permanently in this place. Every family or clan has a separate receptacle for these remains, constructed in several ways, but always covered with a heavy slab of stone: these receptacles are called "Mao-lah," the great stone "Mao-shling," a bone depository—lit., the "bone stone."

M. Schlagintweit has fallen into an error regarding the dolmen-shaped structures, and was not aware that this form is so

intimately connected with cremation, and that bangles and other ornaments are to be found in them. Whether such are removed from the body at the present day is a point I did not satisfactorily clear up, but which is one of interest.

You find the cromlech cuboidal form of four well-cut large stones on edge, closely fitted and surmounted by another horizontal one closing the structure. I give a drawing of a very large and striking one not far from the mission houses at Cherra; one of the sides of this has fallen and been removed, it is probably of great age, and the family is extinct. In other cases a number of rough stones are set up in a circle, crowned by a flat circular slab. I have also seen them of octagonal form, the sketch represents one in the south of Jawai, near the site of a deserted village, one of the side stones has fallen outwards, thus exposing the interior; in this I found several calcined bones and two bangles or wristlets of brass; this surprised me, for I was not aware that ornaments were left on the body on cremation; nor do I think they are at the present day. There were no traces of pottery either, and the bones had not been placed in a vessel as is the usual custom now. The structure was apparently of considerable age, and no village had occupied the site for many years.

A very general form at present of these bone receptacles is that of a heavy slab of stone, level with the ground, covering a cyst, which is lined with stones.

The bones are not consigned to these receptacles for some time, often a year or more after the burning of the body, and in no case until it has been ascertained that the soul of the deceased is at rest, and leading a life, or rather a new existence of happiness; should the whole of his family remain in health, this state is assumed to be attained, if, on the contrary, any member be afflicted with illness or pain, the spirit is understood to be restless and in want of something; the breaking of eggs is resorted to, and such may indicate that it is necessary to sacrifice a fowl or goats, and that the bones of the defunct be taken up and buried in another spot. Such removal, however, in the case of the most troublesome ghost is only done three times, and restless as he may be, the bones are then finally deposited in the family bone receptacle; man and wife are never deposited together; they belong to different clans, thus the ashes of children are placed in the receptacle of their mother's tribe to which they are considered to belong. I would here refer to the paper written by the Rev. J. Pryse in the *Calcutta Review* for 1854, p. 128, with his excellent description of a form of sacrifice. (Appendix B.)

The collection of the bones into one vault, as it may be termed, is done under the impression that the souls of the departed may

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764 775 all mingle together again in one large family without trouble or suffering. The idea of a member of a family being a wanderer in the other world, cut off from, and unable to join the circle of the spirits of his own clan, is most repugnant to the feelings of a Khasi or Synteng. Thus we find every attempt is made on the death of a man in a distant village or district to lead his spirit back with his calcined bones to his native place. For instance, should he die alone on a trading expedition into North Cachar and be buried by a tribe of some other denomination, some relation, if he can afford it, will proceed to disinter and burn the remains; such will be done years after when accident may take some relative near the place. Of this I had an interesting example in my own camp when marching from the Khasi Hills to Asálu.* While encamped at Thangnasip in North Cachar, one of my coolies (porters) came one morning and asked leave for the day for himself and some of his fellows; on asking why they wanted it at such an unusual time, when we were in the field and moving camp, he said that a relation had died in that village while on a trading speculation with dried fish and salt towards Asálu from Jawai. It appeared that the man, having got an attack of fever, had been left behind by his companions, in the hope that he would get round in a few days and then follow them; he, however, eventually died, and was buried by the Kúkis of "Kabór." My men had with some difficulty discovered the grave (for many years had elapsed), the site of Kabór had been changed in the interim, as is the custom of the Kukis, who seldom remain more than four years tilling the same ground, frequently not more than three, known in that part of India as "Joom cultivation"; high grass covered the old village site; the Khasia coolies, however, disinterred the remains, burnt them, and the residue was carefully preserved and sent back to Jawai, the man's native place, to be interred with the bones of his family.

When carrying the remains to the home of the deceased, not only is the greatest care bestowed on them, but the spirit is carefully considered and led onward, to prevent the possibility, as they suppose, of its wandering off the route. Leaves are occasionally plucked, and with three or four grains of rice placed on them, are deposited by the wayside as offerings. On reaching [782] a river this is done on the bank, and sometimes when such a river is large and the abode of some powerful demon, a fowl is let loose in the jungle as an offering to the titular spirit of the stream. A most curious custom exists connected with this transporting of the soul which I have seen on several occasions. The dead, they say, have not the strength or ability to wade

* In Crawfurd's embassy to Siam, we find that a similar idea prevails in that country (see Appendix C).

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through water, and if they trust themselves to it would be carried down the stream, never to be recovered. They, therefore, stretch a thread of cotton from one bank to the other, and if the breadth is great this is kept clear of the water by sticks planted in the bed of the river, and notched at the top to receive it. If the running water should be very narrow merely a stick is laid, or even a stalk of grass is considered sufficient to form a bridge for the dead man's soul. The line of thread is called the "string bridge." 764 775

On passing through some dense dark wood where it is presumed a demon may be, they think it not improbable that he may be detaining them or throwing impediments in the way, and should any of the party fall sick such is to them clearly indicated. The breaking of eggs is resorted to, or a pendulum is made by tying a stone, knife, or generally the brass box in which they keep the lime that is mixed with the betal and pan leaves, and the rite so well described by Hodgson (Appendix A) is gone through. The similarity of the Bodo or Mech customs shows how general these superstitious customs are among the tribes in this quarter. The only difference being that with the Khasi, the weight is caused to revolve in a circle should any spirit require to be propitiated, and that it should cease to revolve when the offering, either a fowl or a pig, is considered to have been accepted. 764 782

Should a Khasia lose his life in such a way that his body cannot be recovered, say by being drowned in one of the large rivers in the plains, his relations assemble on some prominent hill or rock overlooking the low country. One of the members taking some kowries (small shells used as money, Cypræa) in his hand, and, looking towards the site of the accident, shouts out the name of the deceased and calls on him to return; his spirit having been supposed to do so, they proceed to burn the cowries, which are symbolical of his bones, and any clothes of the deceased they may possess. The ashes of the cowries are then placed in the bone depository. 766

The corpse is kept in the house four or five days, occasionally longer.* In the case of chiefs of tribes, men of consequence and wealth, the body after death is preserved in honey, and kept in this way in its coffin for a very considerable period; the platform on which the body is burnt is erected during the times, and considerable expense is entailed on its construction, in cutting the stones, as well as on the expenditure of gunpowder; throughout the day explosions may be heard at irregular intervals from different quarters, now at one side, then at another to drive away [604]

* The excessive and continuous rainfall of the Khasi Hills is not the reason why the dead are preserved in honey; it would be impossible to preserve it in sufficient quantity for such a purpose. Vide M. Schlagintweit's paper in the "Ausland", where this is stated.

[Ind. Antiquary, 1876, p. 187 — Analyst]

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evil spirits, who I suppose they think may be hovering about the neighbourhood. Here we find a custom the counterpart of one in Burmah, where the body of a Buddhist priest of rank is embalmed in honey, and laid in state for a long period, to be afterwards blown up with powder, together with the costly hearse that bears him to the place. The same custom we find in "Crawfurd's Embassy to Siam" exists in that country.

There is some slight analogy to be traced between the funeral customs of the Khasis and Singphos, particularly in the collection of the ashes and subsequent interment. (Appendix D.)

The breaking of eggs is perhaps of all modes of seeking for an omen the most curious of all the Khasi customs, but it is by no means confined to these hill people. I am informed by Colonel McCulloch that the Kúkis and some other of the numerous Hill tribes around the Munipúr Valley do the same; but then it is not so commonly practised, and I never myself saw them engaged at the rite. The Gáros use eggs only for sacrifice. The number broken appears unlimited, but about twenty is a common number. It depends, of course, on the means of the individuals. They use a small board about twelve inches by eight inches square, which has a projecting kind of handle with a hollow to receive the egg to be used. The position of the chips on this board indicates the luck or answers to the inquiry that is sought, and only those pieces that fall within the board, outside of the egg-shell upwards, count as signs. The egg is personified and addressed after this manner: Egg! I am only a man, am ignorant and can divine nothing; you can commune with spirits, and between man and them have intercourse. Now, say! who has done this? (in case of sickness)—who has caused this man to fall sick? If the spirit is in the house, let the signs be on the left; if out of the house, on the right. The exorcist spits on the egg, and taking some clay in his hand, smears it over, so that the outside may be distinctly seen when it is smashed. Apology is made to the egg, saying: I do not spit on you to insult you, but to clean you and give you a colour. Then standing up he throws the egg down with all his force upon the board.

It would appear that only those pieces of egg-shell that fall to the right or left are of consequence in the matter; those that fall beyond or on the off-side of where the egg strikes are the representatives of spirits that are not implicated with the matter in hand, while those that lie on the near side show that the sickness is the cause of purely natural causes, over-eating, drinking, or exposure to heat and cold, and not through the agency of any malignant spirit; such signs are of good import, and indicate (taking a case of sickness) that the person is likely to recover. Should he not do so the egg, or rather the exorcist, a professional specifier called "Ka Nong Kinia", or "Ka Nong Kein Ksuid",

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PLATE III

8: Gurdon C-J (no date) 1904 AE7 Khasi AE7

[End plate I]

holds his own, he can reply: What was the good of calling me 787
in, to seek signs from eggs, when the man was past hope? I could only give you such, and say he was sure to recover.—As might be expected, the sacrificers prey on the ignorance and superstitions of the people; and it not unfrequently happens, I am told, that on one being called in, and after smashing a number of eggs, he declares that owing to previous communion with spirits in other houses, he can do nothing, and recommends that another exorcist be called in, to kill a pig or a fowl, and thus those who can afford it are made to give up as much as can be squeezed out of them.

Any member of the community, if he desires it, can learn the forms of offering, sacrifice, etc., under the instruction of those who are in the profession, and who can thus sanction and look to their due and proper performance. When they sacrifice a cow, goat, or pig, the liver is the principal part examined for omens; if it is smooth and healthy, such are good. The entrails, if full, are a propitious token; the size of the gall-bladder is another point—if small, poverty may fall on the family. Demons also are particular; some will not accept a black or coloured fowl; pure white only will suffice, and these they object often to sell.

It is often a matter of great difficulty to persuade a Khasia to 788
take medicine, especially men from outlying villages; they quite dread it, imagining that, should they take it, some spirit, wroth at not being propitiated, may alter its properties, and thus make them much worse. I have seen a grown-up man burst into tears, and beg that medicine might not be administered, when he was lying seriously ill. They, however, soon find out the good effects of our treatment, especially that of quinine in fever, and they laugh in turn at the scruples of their more ignorant companions.

The Jaintias, or, more properly, the Sintengs, on the East, are, 789
I think, more under the influence of their exorcists than are the 792.
Khasis, on the West. On certain occasions, individuals sacrifice a number of animals to different demons and a great feast is held, to which numbers are invited; men, women, and children, are then arranged in large circles, each with a leaf for a plate before them, on which the meat, when dressed, is served.

There is, however, one very extraordinary custom—one, I am 789
glad to say, confined to only a few villages in the Jaintia country—called "Tarroo". The unfortunate individual who is presumed to be in league with a demon, in order to clear his character and be again admitted into the society of his kindred, must throw everything he possesses away, even to the clothes on his body, and begin life anew. A man on whom such an accusa-

XV sion falls in deserted by even his wife; for all associating with him after the fact is declared would be equally criminal. The abuse of such a custom is unlimited; private spite must enter largely into its organization; and it becomes a ready method of ruining an individual of whom the community may be jealous, or who is obnoxious to them. The civil authorities have with success looked with disfavour on it, and done much towards breaking the custom down. The missionaries also in Jowei have, no doubt, by the establishment of their small Christian colony, done much towards the same end. This system of witchcraft does not date, I am told, from a very remote period. Names of demons are from time to time invented, or rise up, and the most formidable now is a female demon, having very great wealth, and who is connected with the superstition "tu-ve". The curse may alight on an individual in many ways, of which I give the following instances of how it acts on the community.

XVI A person may get ill, and as in fever, become delirious; those
XVII attending on him listen attentively to his mutterings, and he may constantly take some one's name in connection with his state. This person is said to have the ear of the demoness, and to use such influence for the purpose of bewitching others.

Two persons may join in trade together, and be on the best of terms for several years; but one may have a terrible dream repeatedly, or may be ill, connected with their gains; he may then accuse his partner of having obtained certain power from Tu-ve.

A man, originally in poverty, rising in a very short time to be wealthy, the whole village may secretly, among themselves, point at him as having entered into a compact with this demoness; but no proof is forthcoming until some person suddenly falls ill, and apparently without cause. This sick person is questioned, and even bullied into saying that he believes the curse to have arisen in the face of the accused, as a sign that his further acquaintance is not desired. This is a common custom, and is done to a person for other reasons, such as for stealing, or committing some heinous crime. A woman who supplants the affections of another who is ill may have ashes thrown in her face for spoiling the husband, and in this method, for, of course, it is done in some public place. But, to continue, the family of the sick man next count up the number of pots that have been given by the accused during their intercourse, the number is prepared, made up into a bundle, and placed at his door during the night, and a sucking pig is killed and also left there. In the morning on the first opening of the door, the sign

is seen by the inmates, and quite as soon by the neighbours, who collect to revile and jeer the unfortunate individual; his relations leave him; his wife, if he has one, retires to her parent's or sister's home, and in no other way can he recover his position in society save by throwing away all he possesses; cash and clothes are scattered on the road as he goes out of the village, and are picked up by those who follow; his house, I was told, is also demolished, and the thatch roof carried out and burnt in the outskirts of the place.

This paper has become much longer than I had anticipated, and I fear will exhaust the interest that there may be in it. I had intended alluding to the Khási, Mikir, Garo, etc., and exhibiting drawings of their burial-grounds, but this I think may be best postponed and introduced with some notes on the extension of those tribes and the people of the northern slopes of the Khasi range of hills, if this Society should think such of sufficient interest to them. I trust also that Captain Williamson, Deputy-Commissioner of the Garo Hills, now on leave in England, will give us the benefit of the valuable information I know he has obtained regarding the manners and customs of the Garo tribes, among whom he has mixed so much and so intimately.

Appendix A.

Paper on the Origin, Location, etc., of the Bods, Kooch, Dhimdl People, by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1848. Vol. xvii, pt. ii, p. 739.—"Thirteen leaves, each with a few grains of rice upon it, are placed by the exorcist in the segment of a circle before him, to represent the deities. The Ojha squatting on his hams before the leaves causes a pendulum attached to his thumb by a string to alternate before them, repeating invocations the while. The god who has possessed the sick man is indicated by the exclusive attention of the pendulum towards his representative leaf, which is then taken apart, and the god in question is asked what sacrifice he requires?—a buffalo, a hog, a fowl, or a duck to spare the sufferer (the Ojha best knows how?) a hog, and it is forthwith vowed by the sick man and [illegible] the animal is sacrificed, and he [illegible] the demanding deity."

Appendix B.

Calcutta Review, 1854, p. 139. Paper by the Rev. J. Pryse.—"The universal desire to immortalise the memory of their dead encourages on earth by the erection of stone monuments, may be deemed as a faint indication of an expectation of some kind of future existence. The sacrifice for their dead, which they call 'Sutáing', or 'Kaiát-ing', that is, the ghost or demon of the dead, may be considered indicative of the same notion. The professed intention of the sacrifice is to pacify the

spirit of the dead, so that it may come in the capacity of a "Knuif", or demon, to cause pain and calamity to the family. This sacrifice is frequently repeated after a person's death, if his bones were deposited in a small repository; but if they are placed in a large one, the fear of his injuring the family is not so great, and the sacrifice is not so frequent, because "in both he visits his relatives", the religion and customs were observed regarding him."

Extract from the Rev. J. Pryse's Paper, p. 130.—"The reader is desired to observe that this form is always pronounced, when the person on pronouncing it is in the act of offering his thankofferings; hence it was thought necessary to give a few explanations of the movements of the speaker."

"*Thank-Offering to secure the Protection of the Goddess.*"

(The Khasia words are, "Ka jing-ngih ryaskem ia ka Mei"; the offering is made in order to secure the kind offices of the goddess in the future, rather than to acknowledge past kindness.)

"Attend, O Goddess, that thou mayest protect us all as a family." [1] as we may increase and prosper. O Goddess, we are now about to sacrifice a large cock, and a large horned goat, also a plantain leaf, flour, baked rice, a heart, and a twig. Do thou, O Goddess, attend to us. I put up and cause to stand the offering for the purpose of appeasing thee, O Goddess! [2] O thou family-builder, I remove and drive away thirty demons, nine demons,[3] and Ka Tyrsit Ka Snor,[4] that I may prepare and set aright the intestines, that I may cut the throat of the cock, and sprinkle the blood upon the twig.[5] Away, thou Ka Tyrsit ka Snor! I sweep away and remove thee, that I may open a clear road for the purpose of inquiring concerning the good and the evil. Thus it is proper that I should sacrifice a large horned goat. Attend thou, O Goddess, whilst I offer to thee a sacrifice and the backbone after I shall have hid it here and made it ready.[6] Attend thou, whilst I observe and keep the rules and customs, and whilst I offer to thee a sacrifice in order that thou mayest give us

[1] = "all as a family". "kaneh shi kur", "ka kur", is generally used among the Khasis to signify all those who are related by blood.

[2] Whilst saying these words, the officer prepares the place, and arranges the offering.

[3] The officer, whilst saying this, throws some dirt on the ground to signify the evil spirits, and drive them away, but they should denote the sacrifice and invocation. "Lajyen kaiid kyndi kaiid"—here neither thirty nor nine should be regarded as the exact number, but both signify any number indefinitely great; much in the manner as the number one thousand was regarded by the Jews, and as that number is occasionally used in Scripture. The phrase, "kyndi kaiid", nine demons, seems to be an old phraseology, the exact meaning of which is not known at present; but "lajyen kaiid", thirty demons, is the common phrase in use to signify an indefinitely great number—it means all.

[4] The name of one of the most powerful and malignant demons.

[5] Whilst speaking these, the officer kills the cock, and sprinkles the blood on the [illegible] above.

[6] The officer's hands are busily employed in preparing his sacrifice whilst he utters the above speech.

health, that we may increase and prosper, that we may walk securely, that we may enjoy our possessions in security, that we may carefully ameliorate our families, that we may increase in number. Do thou embrace us, do thou cuddle us in, do thou support us whilst we observe the rules and customs, that we may become numerous, that we may offer thee sacrifices. Come thou and receive us, receive us at thy feet, that we may spread out on the right and on the left. Come, cuddle us in; come, support us; come, envelope our spirits with thy power."*

This sacrifice is generally made by a whole *Kúr* or family *all related* by blood.

Appendix C.

Crawfurd's "Embassy to Siam", p. 19.—"Under ordinary circumstances so much importance is attached to the rite of burning the dead, that if the ceremony cannot be performed soon after death, either from poverty, or from the party dying at a distance, the body is first buried, and afterwards, as soon as convenient or practicable, disinterred and consigned to the funeral pile. Of persons of distinction, a few of the bones are kept, and either preserved in urns in the houses of their relations, or buried, with little pyramidal monuments over them, in the ground adjacent to the temples. Of these monuments we saw a good number: they are small and paltry, without any inscription.

Appendix D.

W. Griffith's "Journals", p. 13.—"Close to the village are the burying-places of two Singphos. These have the usual structure of the sepulture of the tribe, the graves being covered by a high conical thatched roof. I find, from Bayfield, that they first dry their dead, preserving them in odd-shaped coffins until the drying process is completed; they then burn the body, afterwards collecting the ashes, which are finally deposited in the mounds over which the conical sheds are erected," etc., etc.

Appendix E.

Burning the Dead, etc.—"The practice of preserving dead bodies in honey has not arisen, as M. Schlagintweit states, from the extremely cold season experienced at Chedra. Bodies are burnt throughout the year, as I have witnessed. Men of rank or wealth are treated of the dry cold weather, and not burnt until a propitious time has been selected. The custom, no doubt, has been derived from its Hindoo source."

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* Mr. Pryse remarks: "However devoid of sense or puerile the traditional and superstitious literature of the Khasis may be considered, the writer is not sure that he is able to elicit much more sense from many parts of the much talked of literature of the Vedas and Puranas of the Hindu sages," and he offers a specimen from the Semitic.

Measurements of Size and Height of the Stones composing the Monument of Lailongkoit, Khasi Hills (from careful measurement of same).

Upright Stones or Obelisks.

	Cubic feet.	Total cubic feet.
No. 1 = 139. 10in. × 6ft. 6in. × 1ft. 6in. =	810	
2 = 140. 8in. × 3ft. 6in. ×	3in. =	490
3 = 110. 4in. × 6ft. 6in. × 1ft. 6in. =	617	
		1769

Upright Stones or Rectangles.

1 = 100. 6in. × 3ft. 6in. × 1ft. 6in. =	1167	
4 = 120. 6in. × 3ft. 6in. × 1ft. 6in. =	630	
5 = 95. 6in. × 3ft. 6in. × 1ft. 6in. =	495	
6 = 95. 3in. × 2ft. 6in. ×	3in. =	164
7 = 110. 8in. × 6ft. 8in. × 1ft. 2in. =	550	
8 = 95. 6in. × 2ft. 3in. × 1ft. 2in. =	204	
9 = 110. 8in. × 2ft. 6in. × 2ft. 2in. =	394	
11 = 120. 5in. × 1ft. 6in. × 1ft. 6in. =	467	
		4177
		5946

The Largest Flat Stone or Coping.

Greatest length, 20ft. 6in.; breadth, 10ft.; and mean thickness, about 1 foot: measured by co-ordinates laid off from a central line, at 2 feet apart, with the thickness at edge. Total of cubic feet in mass 329·6.

Flat Stones or Supposed Seat, and the two Steps.

	Mean length.	Mean breadth.	Mean thickness.	Cubic feet.
No. 1 = 6ft. 6in. × 5ft. 6in. × 6ft. 3in. =				320
2 = 5ft. 8in. × 3ft. 8in. × 1ft. 6in. =				320
3 = 5ft. 2in. × 3ft. 3in. × 1ft. 6in. =				270
4 = 5ft. 1in. × 2ft. 2in. × 1ft. 6in. =				490
5 = 3ft. 2in. × 1ft. 8in. × 1ft. 6in. =				320
6 = 3ft. 2in. × 1ft. 6in. ×			6in. =	120
				2040 cubic feet.

The specific gravity of granite being taken at 2·6, or 163 lbs., the weight of the Lailongkoit granite by experiment, we have for the weight of the largest flat stone, 329 cubic feet = tons 21 : 19 : 3 : 7; for the other six, 204 cubic feet = tons 21 : 9 : 1 : 9.

Discussion.

Dr. Colquhoun said the "Asiatic Researches" for the year 1829 contained a short paper by a Mr. Walters on the Khasi (Chasia). The paper in question, which related to the village of Nongklao, also contained drawings of certain stone monuments; among others, four large circular stones standing together. They were only a few feet

9: Godwin-Austen G-3 (no date) 1872 ART Khasi ART

high, with a smooth surface, and rounded tops cut down; but it did not appear for what purpose they were used. Mr. Walters stated that the upright and table stones referred to in the paper were monuments to the memory of deceased rajahs and chiefs; that the upright slabs of granite were detached from the rock by means of fire; and that the dead bodies of the Khási are burned at an appointed place, and the ashes placed in earthen pots, which are deposited under the stones. He (Dr. Charnock) doubted the suggested derivation of the name of the tribe. If derived from the Himálayási, it could not be very ancient. The chief interest in the paper lay in the fact that the Khási erect these monuments at the present day.

Sir Duncan Gibb said there was a feature of some interest in the author's very interesting paper, and that was the statement that the stones of the megalithic remains described by him were obtained from quarries of sandstone not far distant from the place in which they were erected. Now, this point he looked upon as of considerable importance, because it so readily explained the comparative facility of transport of such huge masses of stone as enter into the construction of the monument described. In this country the most diverse opinions prevailed as to the locality whence the stones were obtained composing such monuments as are found at Stonehenge, Avebury, and other places, and he thought the author had added to the value of his paper by giving accurate details as to the locality whence the stone was obtained, composing the remarkable monuments so graphically illustrated; nevertheless, as a geologist, he should like to know from the author to what formation these sandstones belonged.

Col. A. Lane Fox thought the Institute might be congratulated upon the paper which they had just heard, which was one of the most important contributions to anthropology that had been received for some time past. It was impossible to overrate the value of the details of the manners and customs which Major Godwin Austen had given, and which were associated with the erection of these megalithic monuments at the present time. They might at some future time serve as links of evidence in interpreting the object of similar monuments in other times and places. The great problem before the Institute, he thought, was how far the builders of these monuments in our own time might be regarded as the representatives of those who erected them in the prehistoric period of Europe, or how far the monuments themselves might be regarded as survivals from the prehistoric age. The geographical distribution of these monuments, as he had before shown in the *Ethnological Journal*, was continuous, or nearly so, extending from these Khasia in the north-east of India to Central India, Persia, Asia Minor, the Crimea, along the north coast of Africa bordering the Mediterranean. They are found in Etruria, up the south and west coast of France into Britain, and as far as Denmark and Sweden. In so far as our present knowledge enabled us to judge, they were unknown in Russia proper, in Northern Asia, in Central and Southern Africa, and on the two continents of America, with the exception of Peru. Their continuous geographical distribu-

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tion extending from our own country to the country of these Kasias was in favour of the view that their erection might be a practice handed down by them from the remotest time; and this gave great additional interest to the study of the customs of the people who built them. Evidence of great antiquity of these monuments in India was wanting; most of those examined in Central India have been found to be associated with implements of iron; but it had been shown that iron in the soil in that country would be preserved for ages, and there was no knowing how far back the use of this metal might have extended. There was one peculiar custom which in Europe, Africa, and Russia appeared to have nearly the same geographical distribution as these monuments, and which was sometimes associated with them; he alluded to the custom of placing pieces of rags upon trees at holy wells and elsewhere as a cure for diseases, and he should like to ask Major Austen whether this custom prevailed upon these Kasias or in their neighbourhood.

Mr. Hyde Clarke observed that Colonel Fox had just enumerated the geographical region of megalithic monuments, and this was precisely the region described in his paper on the Caucaso-Tibetans. The areas are coincident. The Khasias are united among tribes, which have linguistic affinities with Georgian and Palæogeorgian. The present Khasias cannot, however, be considered as *in situ* in reference to the ancient migration connected with the stone monuments of the Dekkan, but are a subsequent migration. The connection of traditions between Khasias, etc., and Burmah is simply because they are obtained from a common centre in High Asia. Among the many valuable facts is that of the male and female stones, and the numbers of these are, perhaps, also male and female. The numbers three and seven signify middle. In two cases where eleven occur they are arranged as six and five. The male stones are more numerous than the female, and may have some relation to polyandrous notions. Egg divination may possibly have its metaphysical basis in the relations which exist in many languages in the form of words for eye (augo) and egg. Major Austen's testimony to the moral qualities of the hill tribes is of value. Dr. Hunter, hon. member Anthropological Institute, has pointed out in his *Rural Life in Bengal* that it is on the hill tribes we must specially rely for the invigoration of our Indian empire.

Mr. W. C. Dewick: The great merit of this paper is that it is written by a careful observer who was an eye-witness of all which he describes; one such narrative is worth a volume of compilations. In our own region the megalith is a relic of very ancient date, the record, perhaps, of a semi-barbarous race, and all account of them is usually speculative and conjectural. In the east we learn there are kistvaens and cromlechs and dolmens of recent date, the constructors of which are yet in existence, and an inquiry into their history may elucidate by analogy some of the obscurity that has yet clouded our own megalithic monuments. Choir Gaur or Stonehenge is composed of several sorts of rock, blue stone and marble, sand and granite: why is this variety of selection? Among Major Austen's sketches there is

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one of a beautiful megalithic temple, and he alluded to male and female stones. May this variety of quality and colour in the stones be symbolical of idol or astral or planetary worship? In Asia, it seems, these relics are chiefly within a certain latitude forming a belt from Oceania to the Mediterranean, the zone, indeed, of the anthropomorphous simiæ; and we have accounts of the relics of Asiatic pigmies discovered in and around one of these arcadiahs not remote from the Khasi Hills. Remembering the influence of climate on both mind and body, it might be interesting to inquire how far a superstitious psychology may be an ethnic trait among the less accomplished orientals.

Dr. A. Campbell, Mr. James Fergusson, Mr. J. W. Flower, Dr. Stenhouse, Mr. E. B. Tylor, Mr. Wake, and the Chairman, also took part in the discussion.

9. Godwin-Austen G-3 (no date) 1972 ART Khasi ART

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THE STONES AT MAWFLANG KHASI HILLS

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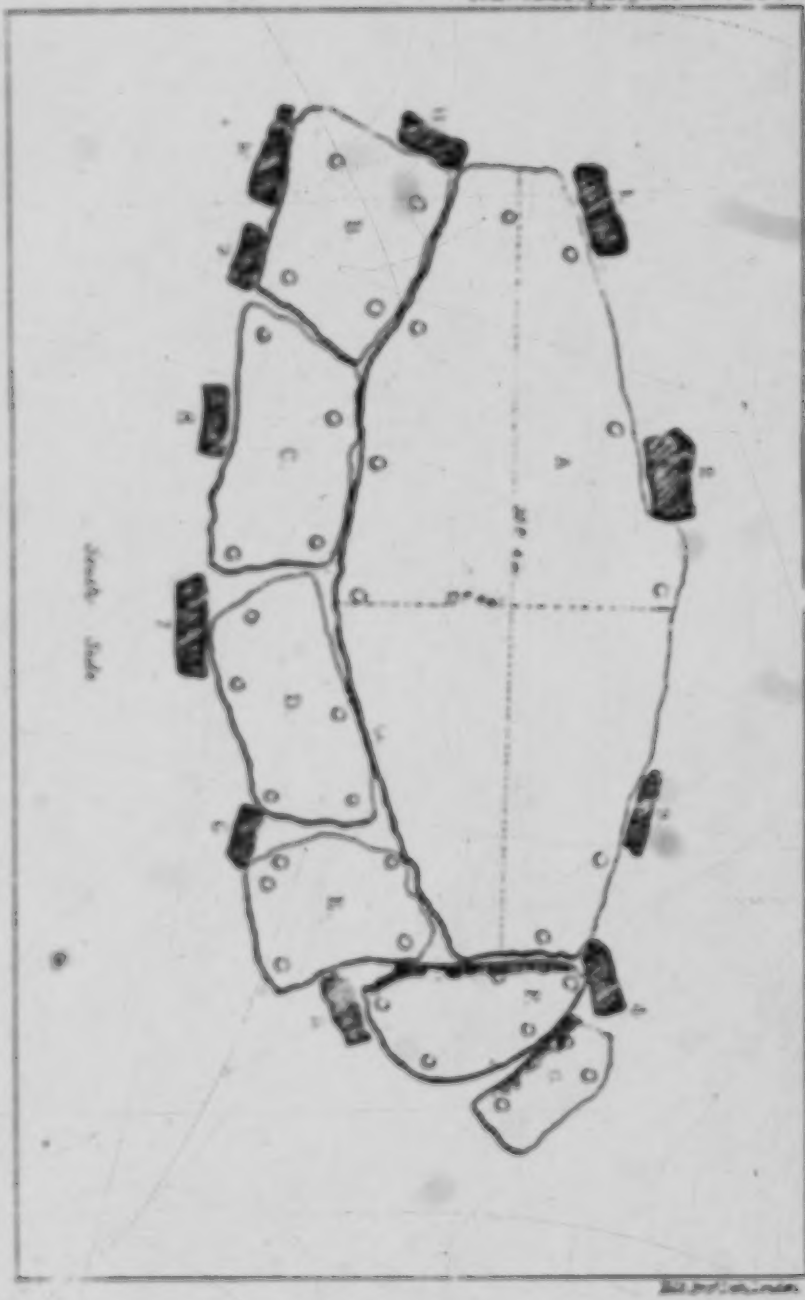

[End plate 3]

[End plate 4]

PLANS OF MONUMENTAL STONE STRUCTURES KHASI HILLS